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Stages in Life: Life Cycle in a Ghanaian Society

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Stages in Life:

In any traditional society in Ghana, the growth of man is marked by stages. These are the stages – birth, puberty, marriage, death and life after death. These stages are termed *Life Cycle*.

After birth the baby grows through the puberty stage into a young adult and then to adulthood. The adult then marries, brings forth children, grows old, and dies. After death, he moves into the next world.

Some religious rites and ceremonies are performed for each stage. There are rites and ceremonies for birth, puberty, marriage and death.

We shall now study these rites and changes that take place over time.

Birth Ceremonies:

In most Ghanaian communities, birth is marked by a simple ceremony which is called “outdooring” and/or “Naming.” It is called an “outdooring” because on that day the baby who until then has been kept out of public view is brought out. It is also called “Naming” because it is the day on which he will be given a name. The naming gives the child his identity as a Ghanaian and a member of his ethnic group.

The Ga call this ceremony *Kpodziemo*, the Akan *Abadinto* or *Dzinto*, the Dagomba *Sunna*, and the Ewe *Vihehedego*. How do you call this ceremony in your language? Outdooring or Naming ceremonies are social events to which friends and relatives are invited.

There are many explanations for keeping the baby out of public view before the ceremony. Some people believe that the baby faces many dangers soon after birth. If he is able to survive these dangers, he is then given a name. Others regard the baby as a stranger or a visitor. This is why the baby at this stage is referred to in Dagbani as *Saando* or *Saanpaga*, *Ohoho* in Akan and *Amedzro* in Ewe. Other people also believe that for the first seven days the baby is not regarded as a human being.

In most communities such as the Akan, Ga, Ewe, Nzema, and Dangme, the naming ceremony takes place on the eighth day after birth. But for most ethnic groups in the Northern and Upper Regions, it takes place on the third day if the baby is a boy, and on the fourth if it is a girl. Generally, the ceremony takes place in the early hours of the day.

Choosing names for the new-born baby differs from community to community. For example, in the Northern and Upper Regions, a diviner is consulted for the name of the child. Some Anlos have names from their *cult* groups. Different circumstances also determine a baby's name. For instance, among the Anlo, a baby born on a rainy day is named “Tsigbe.” “Anto” or “Antobam” is given to the Akan child whose father dies before he is born, and “Awia” or “Kawia” is given to a Kasena baby who is born in the afternoon.

Let us discuss the rites performed by some communities during their naming or outdooring ceremonies.



Naming Ceremony among the Sisala:

The Sisala believe that every new-born baby is *reincarnated*. Since he is reincarnated he should be given a name by the ancestor responsible for his reincarnation. Therefore, as soon as a baby is born, his father or an elder male relation from his father's lineage consults a *Vuruga* (a Diviner) to find out the name for the child. The name is then kept secret until the naming ceremony.

A night before the ceremony, the "Diatina" (Head of family) of the father's lineage informs all the members of the family that he is going to "give water" to their ancestors so everybody should be present.

This ceremony is known as "the ceremony of Giving Water" because it is believed that the ancestors who incarnate in babies remain thirsty until the baby is given water at the naming ceremony. The ceremony takes place early in the morning in a room in which the ancestral shrine is kept. At the gathering, the "Diatina" offers water and sacrifices fowls. He also calls God, the ancestors, the earth-god and the gods of the shrines of the "Janwuo" (Family). After this a sheep is slaughtered and the "Diatina" says: "This is for the visitor. This is his food." At this stage, the baby who is in a different room is brought to the gathering.

The "Diatina" takes him in his arms and calls out the name given to him aloud three times if he is a boy and four times if she is a girl. After this, the "Diatina" says to the baby –

You have come back to us.

You will have to bring us peace.

Let's have good yield.

Keep the house well and don't let any trouble come to us.

Sleep soundly and let your mother work.

Don't be a crying baby.

Don't trouble your mother.

After saying all these words, the ceremony is brought to an end. The women prepare food with the meat for the people present. There is merry-making throughout the day.

The following are some Sisala names which are related to spirits:

- (i) Dina (boy), Hadina (girl) –named after the soul shrine. Soul is known in Sisala as Dina.
- (ii) Batong (boy), Hatong (girl) –named after the hunting spirit (tong tome).
- (iii) Luri (boy), Daluri (girl) –named after *Luri* or the Xylophone spirit.

Naming Ceremony among the Dagomba:

The Dagomba naming ceremonies follow either the traditional or Islamic pattern. Before the baby is named, he is regarded as 'Saando' (stranger) for a boy or 'Saanpaga' for a girl.

According to Dagomba tradition, the father of the baby or the "Dogiri Kpema" (family head) consults a diviner on the second day of the child's birth. He asks the diviner to protect the child against witches and people who may send charms as presents to him. He can also consult the head of a shrine for the same purpose. Where the head of a shrine is consulted, the baby can be named after the shrine. Some fathers, too, consult a diviner on the sixth or seventh day to find out which name the child would like to take.

If the child is found to be reincarnated, he is named after that ancestor, if not he is named 'Sandu' or 'Sampaga' meaning a strange man or a strange woman.

After a name has been found for the baby, he is brought out for the naming ceremony in the early hours of the eighth day. The ceremony is performed by the "Dogiri Kpema" (family head). Sacrifices of fowls are made to the ancestors and the family gods. He asks for blessings for the child. The child is then shaved. In the olden days, the child was given tribal marks at this stage. Food is prepared with the meat of the fowls and shared among the gathering. The child from this time is kept in the house until the fortieth day when he could be carried anywhere.

Some traditional believers among the Dagombas have adopted Islamic practices in their naming ceremony. Before the naming ceremony, messages are sent round by distributing kola. The ceremony takes place early in the morning in the house of the "Dogiri Kpema" or the father. He will be given several names by a Mallam and out of these he will choose one. When the name is chosen, a female relative from the father's line announces it loudly. The child is brought out and shaved by a barber. He is carried by the midwife or an elderly female relative of the child's father.

During the ceremony his elder brothers go round to distribute the meat and bowls of food prepared for the occasion. The first bowl of food is usually sent to the chief. There is jubilation and merry-making afterwards.

Naming Ceremony among the Akan:

The naming ceremony among the Akan is called *Dzinto* or *Abadinto*. Like the Ga and the Ewe, it is performed early in the morning on the eighth day.

The person chosen to perform the rites should be of a good moral standard. The father is usually represented by his sister.

The man performing the rites puts the child on his lap. He then asks for the child's name and announces it. Libation is poured during which he prays for prosperity for the child and furthermore asks that he should be blessed with many children.

He then dips his right forefinger into water and wets the child's lips with the water three times. He mentions the child's name each time saying, for example, "Adu Gyamfi, wose nsu a, nsu a" (Adu Gyamfi, when you say water, it must be water). He does the same with palm wine or schnapps and says, "Wose nsa a, nsa a" (When you say palm wine, it must be palm wine) and then adds, "Wose tuntum a tuntum, Wose fitaa a fitaa" (When you say it is black, it must be black, and if you say it is white, it must be white). The significance of the sayings is that the child should be truthful, or he should know the difference between good and evil.

Among some Akan, a cutlass is placed in the hand of a male child and a broom in the hand of a female child or a basket is placed over her for a few seconds. The purpose of this rite is to introduce the child to hard work.

The child and the mother are presented with gifts by the father (husband), relatives, and friends. The father's (husband's) gifts to the child are usually a bucket, a towel, soap, clothes, pomade, etc. The mother is given a cloth, a handkerchief, jewelry, sandals, etc., by the father (husband). This presentation is known as *Tanfi* (in Akan). The person after whom the child is named also presents gifts to him, e.g., gold ring and money.

The Akan have various ways of giving a name to a child. Before the eighth day, the child is given the name of the day on which he was born. This becomes his first name. For example, if he was born on a Friday, he will be called *Kofi*, if a boy and *Afua*, if a girl. All such names have by-names. The by-name for Friday born, for example, is *Akyin* or *Kyin* and so the child can be called Kofi Akyin or Kofi Kyin or Afua Kyin or Afua Akyinba. The Fantes have *Ebowas* as a by-name for Tuesday born. Therefore, we have *Kobena Ebow*.

Day	Male		Female	
Monday	Kwadwo	Okoto, Asera	Adwoa	Badwo, Adae
Tuesday	Kwabena	Ogyam, Ebo	Abenaa, Araba	Kosia
Wednesday	Kwaku	Daaku, Bonsam, Abaaku	Akua, Ekua	Obisi, Ekusee
Thursday	Yaw	Preko, Opereba	Yaa, Aba	Bosuo, Seandze
Friday	Kofi	Otuo, Kyini, Babone, Ntiful	Afua, Afia, Efua	Beefi, Nkoso
Saturday	Kwame	Atoapoma, Ataapem	Amma	Nyamekye, Adoma
Sunday	Kwasi	Bodua, Obueakwan	Akosua, Esi	Dampo, Dapaa

On the day of the naming ceremony, the child is named after his father's relative or someone the father wants to honor, for example, his father-in-law or mother-in-law. Most Akan names have their masculine and feminine forms, e.g., Ansa for a boy and Ansa for a girl, Owusu/Owusuaa, Esar/Essaba, etc.

A child who is born in answer to a request made to a shrine or god is named after that shrine or god. We have examples of such names as 'Tano,' 'Densu,' 'Afram,' 'Pra,' etc. Can you find five such names?

Some names depict the circumstances in which a child is born, e.g., *Antobam* or *Anto* is for a child whose father died before he was born. *Afriyie* is for one born at a good time. Others show the festive occasions on which they were born, e.g., Adae (*Adae* festival), Fordwoo (*Fordwoo* festival), *Bronya* (Christmas day).

The Akan child can have different names. These include names which are given to children who die and reincarnate. Such names are known as Apentedin or Okobae (go and return). Such names which refer to filthy or nasty things are believed to prevent such children from dying. Examples are: Sumina (incinerator), Odonko (marked face). Cuts are made on the faces of such children.

Furthermore, the Akan have names for the order in which children are born.

Ceremonies for Twins:

Among some Ghanaian communities the birth of twins is greeted with great joy and satisfaction. Twins are believed to have special powers and bring good luck to their parents. Special rites and ceremonies are, therefore, performed for them.

The word *Haadzii* means twins in Ga. It is believed that each set of twins has a partner spirit.

Therefore, a special shrine is made for the Haadzii as soon as they are born. In this shrine is a pair of bush cow horns. *Haadzii yele yeli* is an annual yam festival for twins.

The elder of twins of different sexes is called *Oko* or *Akwete* for a male and *Akwete* for a female. In the case of female twins, the elder is called *Akwete* while the younger is called *Akuoko*. A child born after twins is called *Tawia*, next after him is *Ago*, and the next is called *Abam*.

The Akans call twins *Ntaa/Ntafo*. As soon as they are born, strings of red and yellow beads and cowries are tied on their wrists. This is called *Abam*. Like the Ga, Fridays are sacred days for the Ntafo (twins). On these days special ceremonies known as *Abam* are performed for them. They are given a ritual bath.

Before the special ritual bath takes place, another *Abam* is set up. This consists of a calabash with water and white clay, red and yellow beads, cowries, gold dust, and herbs called *Adwira* or *Odwen haban*. It is covered with a piece of calico. This *Abam* is used on Fridays and at the beginning of new harvests. The Friday ceremonies and the ritual bath are also known as *Abam*.

According to the Akan, the elder of twins of different sexes is called *Ata* for the male and *Ataa* for the female. In the case of male twins, the elder is called *Ata Panyin* and the younger is *Ata Kakra* or *Obiwom*. For female twins, the elder is *Ataa Panyin* and the younger is *Ataa Kakra* or *Obiwom*.

Like the Ga, the child born after the Ntafo is called *Tawia*, but the one after *Tawia* is *Nyankomago*, while the one after *Nyankomago* is called *Atuakosan*.

The Ewe call twins *Venoviwo*. Like the Akan, the Ewe prepare strings of beads known as *Axokui* and put them on their wrists. Among the Anlo, for example, the elder of the twins is called *Etse* for the male and *Xetsa* for the female. The younger is called *Atsu* for the male and *Xi* for the female.

In some other Ewe communities the elder of a set of male twins is called *Venoviwo Ata* and *Ata Kuma* for the younger. The elder of a set of female twins is called *Atava* and *Atava Kuma* for the younger. When the twins are of different sexes, the male is called *Atsu* and the female *Atsufi*.

Among the Grunsi, twins are known as *Liiba* or *Nsuya Siyi* (Two hands). On their birth, a special shrine is made in their father's compound for them. The first fruits of every year must be sacrificed for the twins on this shrine. When the twins grow, wherever they may be, they must come home for this ceremony.

Ayini or *Awene* (the sky god) is the name given to the elder of the twins whilst the younger is called *Atena* (the land).

Order	Male	Female
1. Twins		
(a) Boy and Girl	Ata (Panyin/Obuom)/	Ataa (Panyin/- (Obuom)/Kakra)
(b) Two Boys	i. Ata Panyin ii. Ata Kuma/Obuom (Obiwom)/Kakra iii. Ntahene (Both)	

(c) Two Girls		i. Ataa Panyin
		ii. Ataa Kuma/-
		Obuom
		(Obiwon)/Kakra
2.	1 st after Twins	Tawia
3.	2 nd after Twins	Nyankomago
4.	3 rd after Twins	Atuakosan
5.	4 th after Twins	Damusaa/Damugyan
6.	5 th after Twins	Obookurukuruwa
7.	6 th after Twins	Korebiamma

Changes that have occurred in the Performance of Naming Ceremonies:

Today formal education, Christianity, Islam, and other religions have brought some changes in the naming ceremonies and rites. Nowadays, instead of the child being born in the house and kept out of public view until the eighth day, some babies are born at hospitals, clinics, and health centers. Some even spend more than a week there. When this happens, the naming ceremony does not take place until they are discharged from the hospital.

The practice of letting drops of water trickle onto the baby's naked body is dying out. The baby is dressed and placed on a mat or on somebody's lap. The hand is used to sprinkle the water. Where drinks like palm wine and schnapps are used to wet the baby's lips, some people now use soft drinks like Fanta and Coca Cola.

Twins born to parents of certain religions do not make shrines for them, neither do they put special beads on their wrists.

Nowadays, most Ghanaians have turned naming ceremonies into big social occasions. Such occasions, which do not involve any rites, may take place after the eighth day. Relatives and friends are invited where there is a feast and merry-making. People then present gifts to the child, which are usually in the form of money.

In addition to their traditional names, some children are given religious and European names.

Importance of Naming Ceremonies:

We now know why and how child-naming ceremonies are performed. Apart from performing the rites to welcome the child into the family and the community, there are other uses too. We have already learnt that in some communities, the baby is called a stranger or a visitor until he is given a name. Therefore, the community regards him as a human being only after the ceremony. So we can say a naming ceremony makes the child a human being.

The baby is given a name which is sometimes a family name, therefore, through the naming ceremony, he is accepted into the family and identified as a member. The baby is also identified as an individual.

Naming ceremonies are also important because they mark the beginning of the laying of the foundation for good morals and values such as *truthfulness*. Even though the child cannot talk and cannot understand whatever goes on around him, he is taught to be truthful and this is seen in the “water and the wine or gin” given to him to taste. He is also named after someone or an ancestor with good character, and it is expected that when he grows, he will be like the person he was named after.

Initiation Ceremonies:

After childhood the next important stage in a person's life is puberty. At puberty, initiation rites are performed to lead the person into adulthood. This will enable him to take part in the activities of his community as a full member.

Most Ghanaian communities have rites and ceremonies to mark this change. Puberty rites differ from community to community. For instance, among the Krobo and the Akan, only girls undergo puberty rites. In some communities such as those in the Northern and Upper Regions, puberty rites are performed for both boys and girls.

Through these rites, girls at the age of puberty are taught the traditional ideals of womanhood. They also give girls the right to marry and they help them to become good wives. The rites also prepare young people in matters of sexual life, marriage, child-bearing, and family responsibilities.

We shall now look at some examples of initiation rites.

Initiation Rites for Boys:

Generally, most communities do not have initiation rites for boys. In the past, what most communities did, among the Akan for example, was that, when a boy came of age the father customarily presented him with a gun, a cutlass, or an instrument of trade. For example, when he is given a cutlass he is allowed to make his own farm. This presentation indicates that he can work and look after himself and his wife and, therefore, he can marry.

Among the Sisala, the change to adulthood for a boy is known as “Baala” (man). This is not marked by any initiation ceremony because customarily, a Sisala boy is introduced to adult life at a very early age. He is always in the company of his father and other male relatives. In this way, he gets to know all aspects of adult life except sex. When he reaches puberty, he is considered a man (baala) and therefore can marry.

Girls' Initiation Rites:

Girls' initiation rites take various forms. Let us now look at initiation rites among some communities.

Puberty Rites of the Krobo (Dipo):

“Dipo” is the name given to girls' puberty rites among the Krobo. A girl who takes part in the puberty rites is called “Dipo-yo” (Dipo girl).

“Dipo” ushers a girl into womanhood. In the past, any girl found to be pregnant before or during the ceremony was severely punished, and sometimes she was banished from her home, town, or village.

The initiation ceremony takes place in the month of February. During this time, an announcement is made on behalf of the Earth Goddess (Nene Kloweki) that any parent with a daughter at puberty stage

should come out to make her a *Krobo* woman. Immediately after this announcement, parents with such daughters present them to their clan priest or priestess responsible for "dipo." The priest then pours libation and asks for blessings for them. A series of ceremonies then follow.

The first ceremony begins on a Thursday or Sunday which is a sacred day for Nene Kloweki. The first part of the ceremony is known as "Kpawomi" (tying of string). In this ceremony, the normal beads women wear around their waist are replaced by a simple string with only one reddish bead. This is done by an old woman (Yomoyo).

The second part is done by shaving the lower part of the girl's head (yi-si-pomi). After shaving, a raffia fibre is tied around her neck. Any girl who dresses in this way is identified as 'dipo-yo.'

On Saturday morning the girls have a ritual bath (aya-pa) at the riverside. On returning from the riverside they are made to taste non-Krobo foods, such as groundnut and sugar cane, three times. After this, they eat a special meal known as "Ho-fufui." In the evening, the dipo girls have their hair shaved. Libation is poured with millet-beer, palm wine, and schnapps, during which the gods of the family are called to bless and protect the girls. This is called *triple libation*.

The most important aspect of Saturday's ceremonies is the *killing of a goat* (to-gbemi) in the night. The parent of every dipo girl presents a castrated goat for a sacrifice. Each goat is slaughtered and the blood is allowed to flow under the feet of each dipo girl. The ritual is believed to wash away anything that will prevent their growth into womanhood and motherhood. Each dipo girl is then seated on a special stool covered with a white cloth.

The *climax* of the ceremony known as *The Sacred Stone Ceremony* takes place on Sunday evening. Before the girls go to a place known as *Old Lady's House* for the ceremony, libation is poured for them. They are accompanied by old women who carry presents such as millet-beer and flour, and dried fish to the priests or priestesses who will perform the ceremony. On arrival, another libation is poured for them and they are led to a sacred pot filled with medicine with which they are washed. They are given marks on their bodies to show that they are ready for the final ritual.

The final ritual is *The Climbing of the Sacred Dipo Stone* (te-kwowi Tegbete-yami). Before they go to where the sacred stone is, they are made to sit on the skin of an antelope three times amidst singing and dancing. Their bodies are then decorated with white clay. They also wear around their necks and across their shoulders empty goat intestines filled with air. They march to the chief's or their clan priest's compound. Here, prayers are said and sacred water is sprinkled on them. After this rite they are led to the sacred dipo stone on which they sit. The old women who officiate at the ceremony place them three times on the stone saying "sit up," or "stand up." This rite of sitting on the stone is what is known as *te-kwowi Tegbete-yami*.

In the past, the stone was on the Krobo mountains, but now each clan has a piece of it. This rite is believed to make the dipo girls Krobo *women*.

After this the girls are carried back home with jubilation and the goat intestines are removed. The remaining hair is shaved. Priest-like hats are put on each dipo girl's head.

The dipo girls are confined for one week. During their confinement, experienced old women teach these girls Krobo tradition and practices. They also learn Krobo songs, dances, and dressing. Before the end of the ceremony, some *incisions* are made on the thumb and wrists of each of them. These incisions prove that the girl has undergone the dipo initiation and therefore she is a mature Krobo woman. Finally, 'gani' (elephant hair) is tied around the dipo-yo's head. This is meant to protect and ensure her fertility. They are then richly dressed and led outside the house amid singing of "hayi" (dipo songs) and dancing of dipo dances. They later go round the town to thank relatives and friends who helped to make the initiation possible.

Puberty Rites of the Akan (Bragoro/Brapue):

Puberty rites among the Akan are known as "Bragoro" or "Brapue." Most Akan, especially the Asante and Bono, perform puberty rites for their daughters. A girl who is being initiated is called "Brani" or "Sakyima."

"Bragoro" can be performed only after a girl's first menstruation. As soon as a parent knows of her

daughter's first menstruation, she prepares towards the ceremony. Before the rite, the girl is presented to the queenmother who by some physical examination ensures that the girl is not pregnant. There are both spiritual and material preparations for the ceremony. The spiritual preparation involves finding out if the girl's 'kra' (soul) likes the ceremony to be performed or not. The material preparation, on the other hand, consists of providing all the necessary things such as food items, money, chicken, and so on.

The ceremony is usually held on a Monday or a Tuesday. Relatives, friends, and "Brannwom" (puberty songs) groups are invited. On the day of the ceremony, the initiation is announced early in the morning by the mother. She beats the metal part of a hoe or an old pan with a stick to announce it.

Immediately after the announcement the people assemble on the initiate's compound and sing "brannwom." The first rite for the day is the "enstoolment" which is performed by an old woman who has many children. The initiate takes her bath and covers her head to the waist leaving the face bare. She is placed on a stool three times, remaining on it the third time. The stool is usually placed on a mat covered with a blanket or "kente" cloth. A brass basin called "Yaawa" is filled with water containing "Adwera" or "Odwen-Ahaban" (leaves of Odwen) with an egg and a dry okro fruit is placed beside the girl.

A woman sits beside the "Yaawa." When gifts in the form of coins are put in the "Yaawa," this woman sprinkles water with the "adwera" or "odwen" on the girl. It is believed that the sprinkling of this water will protect her from evil spirits that may make her barren. Women sing and move around the girl. There is a lot of jubilation and merry-making.

Libation is poured with palm wine or schnapps to thank the gods and the ancestors for looking after the girl up to this puberty age. She is presented with gifts by parents, relatives, and friends. All gifts presented are displayed around her.

The next rite is the "ti-yi" (hair cutting). The initiate is given a special hair cut and the father pays some money for it. This money serves as capital for the girl.

The finger and toe nails are cut and her hair is shaped into traditional "Dansinkran" (Asante women's traditional hair style). She is dressed in a new white cloth with her breasts exposed. She wears beads around the neck, wrist, and ankles.

The next stage is the ritual bath which takes place in a stream or a river. Where there is no stream or river, water can be put in a "Yaawa" for the same purpose. Her head (including the face) is covered with cloth and she is carried to the stream for the ritual bath. On arrival, the officiating woman removes her cloth and dips her into the stream three times informing the spirits of the water of their presence and purpose.

The "Brani" (initiate) is then seated on a stool and lime is squeezed so that the juice drops on her head. The following items, "eto" (mashed yam), an egg, and three leaves of "edwono" tree are thrown into the stream.

In some communities, parts of the finger and toe nails together with some cut hair are buried at the river bank.

The actual ritual bath is done by about four women. They use a new local sponge, soap, and lime juice to bathe her. After bathing, she is dressed in a rich kente cloth with a pair of new "Ahenema" (native sandals) to match. Her "dansinkran" hair style is re-shaped nicely. She is carried home under a beautiful umbrella like a queen amidst singing of bragoro songs.

When they get home, she is seated on a stool for the "Anoka" (mouth touching ceremony). This is the *dedication* ceremony. The food items for this ceremony are boiled eggs, eto, elephant skin, banana, and roasted groundnuts. Libation is poured and each of the food items is put into her mouth for her to taste it. This is the "Anoka." Each food tasted is followed by a prayer, e.g., when the elephant skin is tasted, the officiating woman prays, saying: "May the elephant give you her womb so that you bear many children." The initiate's head is then covered with a cloth and a boiled egg is put into her mouth. She is forbidden to bite or chew it. She has to swallow the whole egg. She is given eto and she does the same thing with it. It is believed that biting or chewing those food items will make her barren.

The next ceremony is a great moment for children. The initiate holds the hands of two children (a boy and a girl) and then lets go their hands for them to rush towards a big bowl full of eto and eggs. As soon as the two touch the food, all the other children around rush to scramble for it. While the children are scrambling for the food, the initiate is blindfolded. She is asked to touch two of the children. It is believed that if she is able to touch a boy and a girl she will have children of both sexes.

All this time, the initiate has not eaten, therefore, she invites a few of her friends and eats a good meal with them. There is festivity and merry-making. There is also merry-making afterwards.

With the feasting over, they all assemble to celebrate the day's ceremony with a special dance. The Bragoro singers drum, and all dance. As soon as the initiate takes the floor all others leave the floor. She dances with two or three girls and while dancing she shakes hands to thank all the people present.

Her invited friends are left behind to serve her for six days. During this period they have some evening activities which include story telling, love games and games for girls. They also learn traditional dances and songs, learn to play the "Dondo" (the armpit drum) and any traditional instrument meant for women.

The Sunday of the initiation week is "Ndaase" or "Nnaase" (Thanksgiving Day). The initiate dresses gorgeously. Her outfit consists of kente, a gold chain, a pair of native sandals, attractive beads and an umbrella. All those who will accompany her also put on beautiful clothes. They go round to thank all those who helped to make her initiation ceremony a success.

In the past, when a girl got pregnant before her initiation rites, she was banished from the town or village. The man who made her pregnant was also banished with her. This is known as "*Kyiribra*."

Changes that have occurred in the Performance of Puberty Rites:

Nowadays, other religious beliefs, social changes, and education have brought changes in puberty rites.

Most Christian and Muslim parents do not allow their daughters to go through the rites because they are against their beliefs. Some parents, however, give their daughters eggs and mashed yam when the daughters have their first menstruation.

Formal education has made most girls forget about puberty rites because of their studies. Most girls would like to complete their schooling and get employed before they think of marriage.

Some parents perform the rites for their daughters at an early age for fear of their becoming pregnant before they reach the age of puberty.

Importance of Puberty Rites:

The following are some of the uses of puberty rites for girls:

- i. Puberty rites teach the young girl to be obedient to her parents and prevent her from becoming pregnant before the initiation ceremony.
- ii. A girl who is able to undergo the initiation brings honor to herself, her parents, and her family.
- iii. The rites enable a girl to acquire some capital for her future. She gets this from gifts of money given to her by her parents, relatives, and friends.
- iv. Through her rites, a girl is able to get a good husband since all men want girls with good morals.
- v. She acquires knowledge about good womanhood.
- vi. The rites help the girl to learn some of her traditions, for example, dressing, drumming, and dancing.
- vii. During the initiation, her friends stay with her for some days. They learn to live together, work together, and play together.

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